

## **Oral History Program: Biographical Notes**

**Derry Bernard HILL (1935 - )**

**Civil Engineer**

- Birth & Family:** Derry Hill was born in Sydney in 1935 and grew up on his father's farm near Dubbo in Northwestern New South Wales.
- Education:** Hill completed primary school by correspondence and then won a scholarship to attend Yanko Agricultural High School. The scholarship gave him free accommodation and tuition in return for his assistance during holidays to look after the school farm. For his leaving certificate results he won a University Exhibition which gave him a free university education at Sydney University, which he attended from 1952 until 1956.
- Qualifications:** BSc BE (Civil), Sydney University (year?).  
MIE Aust, CP Engineer.
- Work History:** At school Hill had a leaning towards mathematics and physics which directed him towards a technical career, eventually leading to engineering. He completed a combined BSc and BE(Civil) at Sydney University, living at St Paul's College.
- Hill was conscripted into the Royal Australian Air Force during the Korean War, becoming a pilot. He continued his degree under a plan which allowed students to complete their national service in the Air Force in two, three month periods. Hill played rugby for the University of Sydney, winning a blue, and later played for New South Wales.
- In 1957 Hill went to the School of Business Administration at the University of California, Los Angeles. After three semesters? *(I might be wrong but I thought a semester was something like what we used to call a 'term'. As Pattie says he came back in 1959, should 'semesters' read 'years'?)*, he returned in 1959 to Australia to care for his ill father and never returned to complete the business course.
- Upon returning from America, Hill accepted a management job at John Lysaght. At that time, Lysaght's only produced one building product, corrugated galvanised steel.
- He became a member of a small group, designated to expand and develop the company's building products. He worked on the construction of the first AMP Building at Circular Quay in Sydney. *(This needs some clarification as it is not clear how his work at Lysaghts tied in with the AMP building).*
- At Lysaghts Hill learnt a lot about accounting and finance and he undertook a number of feasibility studies.
- In 1966 he left Lysaghts after the company refused to participate in *(or undertake)* a project to produce iron ore in Western Australia to compete with BHP.
- From 1966 – 1967 he worked with Merck Pharmaceuticals as a Business Consultant

In 1968 he was recruited by the Dillingham Corporation, where he ran a division in shipping and shipbuilding and ultimately became Managing Director and Chairman, including Managing Director of the Corporation's Asia and Pacific Division . At Dillinghams, he was involved with many projects, including the Qantas Head Office Building in Sydney and the controversial Fraser Island mining venture. There were also a number of projects for the World Bank, including a main road between Nadi and Suva, the construction of a large power station in northern Pakistan and a project in Papua New Guinea (*do we know what sort or what it was?*).

He left Dillinghams for a number of reasons and soon after in 1980, the company was taken over and liquidated by Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts.

Hill entered into a pilot venture, Triton Financial Trust, with another ex-Dillingham executive from California and set up development projects in Australia and America from 1980-1991. Between 1980 and 1984 he was also the Chairman of Western Resources and Management and Moruya Gold Mines.

In 1992, Hill was asked to join Accor Asia Pacific, the company holding the rights to build the Novotel hotels.

Following his retirement in 1997 at the age of 63, he joined Reed Construction Australia where, at the time of interview, he was Chairman.

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Prepared by Patricia Taaffe, March 2003 from oral history interview conducted on 20 April 1999